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L E T T E R

FROM

J. C. LOVEJOY, ESQ., TO HIS BROTHER,  
HON. OWEN LOVEJOY, M. C.

WITH REMARKS BY THE EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON UNION.

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From the Washington Union.

We have not read, for many months, a piece of composition so pithy, so sententious, so able, so sound, catholic, or conservative in its sentiments and conclusions as this letter of Mr. Lovejoy. The production is the more remarkable, as the expression of the sentiments, not alone of the individual author of it, but of an immense class of honest men at the North who are sick to disgust of the abominable fallacies of anti-slavery fanaticism. It is the production of a "representative" mind, and the conclusions which it enforces are those, we doubt not, of an immense majority of honest, candid men in the northern States.

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Boston, March 16, 1859.

DEAR BROTHER,—I have read your speech of the 21st ultimo, delivered in the House of Representatives. It has points of considerable smartness, and will be praised by your partisans as a very clever effort ; but I see no other effect that it can produce but to irritate the South, and alienate one section of the Union still more from the other. Have we not at the North stimulated our own self-righteousness, in contrast with the sins of the South, quite up to, or beyond the healthy point? Would it not be well for us, for a time, to look more at our own failings and at the virtues of our brethren at the South?

You speak of the change of tone and sentiment that has taken place during the last twenty-five years on the subject of slavery. I plead guilty to the truth of this charge. It was one of the dreams of my early life, that the condition of mankind might be greatly improved by sudden political changes. The cry of the slave came to my youthful ear, wafted by the eloquent breath of eye-witnesses, from Virginia and New Jersey. Almost every man at the South, at that time admitted that slavery was an evil, moral, social, and political ; the horrors of the middle passage, the barbarian cruelties of Jamaica, came to us across the ocean. Wilberforce and Clarkson had acquired a world-wide fame by their singular devotion to the abolition of the slave trade : the assault was soon made upon slavery itself in the British West

Indies, and the first of August, 1838, was entered in the calender as one of the holy days of the year.

Campbell painted the wild chieftain on his native plains, so noble, so free, so happy—caught, chained, doomed, suffering till the hurricanes in the West Indies were commissioned to avenge his wrongs. The plaintive Cowper wept out his compassion in the touching lines, “I would not have a slave for all the gold that sinews bought and sold have ever earned;” and these tones of suffering, of compassion, of pity, were echoed by every harp, and re-echoed by orator and preacher, till the whole atmosphere of New England was vocal with the cries of the slave. I have done my full share of it; but greater men have been mistaken, and have in riper years been compelled to revise and revoke the opinions of earlier days. Burke once was enraptured with the voice of Liberty, as she cried from across the channel; but in the full strength of his manhood, he was compelled to denounce the crimes committed in her name. Sir James McIntosh wrote his “*Vindiciæ Gallicæ*”: but was compelled, by a longer experience and a wider observation, to cancel the opinions of early life by those of maturer years. I am compelled to cancel many things that I have said on the subject of slavery, and substitute for them the opinions of riper age. I might have once said what, or nearly what, you have said in your late speech in Congress; though I think I should have left out those portions which serve no other end than simply to irritate, without convincing. But my convictions at the present time are, not only that the slaveholders have a complete vindication of their present position, but they are entitled to be looked upon as benefactors to the country and to the human race.

The only ground on which I can claim their patience and forbearance toward us meddling with their affairs, and for abusing them as much as we have, and as some still continue to do, is this: They gave us the false premises on which we reasoned correctly to false conclusions. They gave away their case by concession; for if slavery be a sin, a wrong, or an evil, no fair mind can resist the conclusion that efforts ought to be made as soon as possible to do it away. This philosophy, that slavery is wrong, sprang up in Virginia, and was adopted and encouraged in nearly all the slave States; and the seed was thence, in connection with the correct and grand principles of human government, scattered wide over the free States. They have had their growth, and now it is not a little difficult to pull them up; but they shall take the wheat with them also.

The South are impregnable. The constitution protects them, the Bible protects them, and the experience of mankind protects them. Our fathers made a covenant with their fathers. They came into the Union with their African slaves on terms of equality with us, and with all the rights and privileges that we can claim under the same instrument. They would make no covenant except upon terms of equality. We accepted those terms; we could get no better to-day; and yet we should be glad to make

it, if it were not made, or to renew it, if broken, and on the same conditions we now have. The South claim the right to go into new territory, and try the new land with their slaves, till the territory becomes a sovereign State, and then bow to its will, as before all other sovereigns. This is a just and equitable claim, founded on a fair interpretation of the constitution. Slavery should be permitted to flow by natural laws to regions for which it is best adapted. It will go nowhere else. You could not force it into New Hampshire, nor keep it there if introduced. The experiment has been tried and failed. Slavery was given up in the northern States not by the force of *moral*, but *natural* laws.

It is true the discussions of the last twenty-five years have produced a great deal of sentiment on the subject of slavery in the northern States; but you know how utterly barren of any good results it has been to the African. In *words*—and because their number is small, and will continue to be small—we have in the extreme North given them the rights of citizenship and equality; but in *works* we deny them. The most respectable colored men in Boston would not be permitted to hire or to own and quietly enjoy a pew in the broad aisle of any fashionable church. In the West, where your soil is more fertile, and where more free colored men would be likely to go, you are more stringent; and the black laws of Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, and Oregon, and the still more exclusive Topeka constitution of Kansas—for which, I believe, you and all your republican associates voted—proclaim, as with trumpet-tongue, the innate and ineradicable prejudice against the African, lurking, as it still does, in the bosom of those whose tongues are eloquent for his rights.

I am not a little surprised at the manner in which you speak of Noah. The Bible calls him a “just man, and perfect in his generation; and yet because he, by Divine inspiration and by Divine command, foretold the slavery of the children of Ham, you give him some very hard thrusts, and leave him on the pages of your speech with a character by no means so fair as that given him by the sacred historian. Was Noah in the way of your theory, that you strike at him so vigorously, as though you would hew him down? You say he mistook Canaan for Ham. Suppose he did, the prediction and the curse rest somewhere—on some nation. The principle is the same in the Divine administration. Who are the children of Canaan? Tradition and history unite in the belief that they inhabit the continent of Africa. Their condition fulfils, with remarkable fidelity, the prophecy of that “righteous man and preacher of righteousness,” Noah. “A servant of servants” was the double curse, which has rested on that continent and race for many centuries. It is covered with a net-work of double slavery—every chief having his retinue of slaves, while he pays tribute to some higher chief or petty king.

You seem to lay great stress upon the fact that the Canaanites were not black. How do you know? Dr. Thompson, who has written, perhaps, the most thorough work on Syria and Palestine



that has ever been published, says the ancient inhabitants of that country came from Africa. The great painting of Samson grinding in the mill shows his Philistine drivers very dark, if not black. But you miss the point of the Scriptural precedent and example for slavery. You prove, as you think, that the Canaanites were not black, and then jump at once to the conclusion that, if they were not black, they must have been enslaved because they were *laboring* men. This does very well to stir up prejudice at the North; but is it the truth? The Israelites were permitted to enslave the Canaanites not because they were laboring men, but because they were *heathen*, and thereby so degraded that a transfer to the Hebrew Commonwealth, where the true God was worshipped, was a privilege and a blessing.

This furnishes the parallel point on which American slaveholders rely with great confidence. The Africans were taken from the most degraded heathenism, and are here taught to worship the true God; and, in the opinion of every Bible man, more of them have been fitted for and gone to heaven from the thousands in America than from the millions in Africa. Dr. Dwight said, after long experience and wide observation, that he never knew but one lazy man converted. And as God had some chosen people in Africa, it was necessary that they should be taught to work in order to their conversion. But in the South they are not allowed to read the Bible. Well, in Africa, they neither read it, hear of it, nor from it. Faith cometh by hearing: and is it not better to hear the truth than to live entirely destitute of it?

You quote the eighth-commandment as a prohibition of slavery. This is singular. Were your ancestors thieves? They brought or assented to the bringing of slaves to this country. It is a singular fact, that while we boast of our Puritan ancestry, the laws of the present day would hang half the men that lived a hundred years ago, as engaged in the slave traffic, directly or indirectly; and another law would imprison all the men who lived forty years since. The eighth commandment was given on the way out of Egypt. It was the charter, the constitution of the Hebrew nation. All their other laws were controlled by the Decalogue. Well, now what? Why, they had slaves by Divine permission under this charter. How could they, if the eighth commandment forbids it? But are the slaves stolen? Certainly not by Americans. They buy them, pay for them, transfer them, and provide for them in the only and most benevolent manner in which it can be done. As to the metaphysical abstraction, that man cannot have property in man, it has been contradicted from the foundation of the world to the present time. Holding, use, and transfer, are the elements of property; and this has been done by men to men in all ages; and yet you say that there is no word in the good old Hebrew tongue that conveys the idea of property in man. When a master inadvertently killed his slave, no blood was to be shed, for "*he was his money.*" Does not that mean property?

It cannot be denied that the idea of slavery runs all through the Bible; it was stamped upon the entire history of the Jewish

nation, and upon the history of every vigorous nation upon the face of the earth; indeed I strongly suspect this is the normal condition of large portions of a depraved race, and I can readily believe that a man may sustain the relation of slaveholder, in all good conscience, and with the entire Divine approbation. *There are visible footprints of God's disapprobation of the abolitionism of this country.* Look at the flocks of unclean beasts and birds that have come up out of its train. Infidels that curse God, abuse every man of good character, and then praise humanity in general to counterbalance their malignity and blasphemy. Out of the abstract rights of man have grown the more abstract rights of woman; and once respectable wives call St. Paul a crusty old bachelor, and Abraham a tyrant, because Sarah obeyed him, and Paul makes mention of the fact. The second edition of the rights of woman is divorce, "affinity," and universal concubinage. We have far more of these immoral tendencies in the northern States than they have at the South. Is it not time to look at home?

The truth is, we have been wont to contemplate the condition of the slaves at the South from a wrong point of view. We compare them with races or nations more highly civilized, and their condition seems a harsh and degraded one; but what were they when the Christian nations took them by the hand and led them across the ocean? American slavery has produced and cultivated more African intellect, more social affection, more Christian emotion in two hundred years than all Africa (Central and Southern) for two thousand years. American slavery is a redemption, a deliverance from African heathenism. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty;" and no part of the earth is more dark or more filled with cruelty than Africa. Treading beneath their feet one of the most fertile soils, they cultivate almost nothing—live on fruits and nuts, with few cattle, and little commerce. They are in the first place, lazy beyond all hope of self-improvement. They will not work. Now, God has ordained the law of labor so surely, and so universally, that if barbarians will not work, civilization will yoke them up and drive them to it. This is fixed, sure as light and gravity. Why not? Why should one quarter of the globe, one section of the human family do nothing for the race? If Ham will not bring timber for the ark, Shem and Japheth will drive him to it.

But Africa is not only a great wilderness of loungers, but out of this idleness grow all manner of vices. Work is salvation. Work regenerates the earth and man. Work is progress, and without it nothing. The title deed of the earth to man had this proviso: that he should subdue it and multiply upon it. Now if he only multiplies and does not subdue, he has only a *squatter sovereignty*—no certified title till he builds his house and tills his farm. Hence the Indian must be driven out; he will not work on any condition, neither self-moved nor driven by the hand of another, and, therefore, the last tomahawk of the red man will soon hang as a trophy in the halls of the conqueror. Now, the African works patiently and will when driven to it; he will work

on no other condition. His climate is a terrible protection from white invasion, therefore he must be transported and taught to work, thereby civilized, thereby christianized, thereby improved every way, and perhaps by-and-by sent back to yoke up and subdue his whole continent, according to the pattern that has been shown him in this working bee-hive of America.

You touch in no very fraternal manner some of the social vices of your brethren at the South. Perhaps if they deserved the stone, it should hardly come from a northern hand; the garments of our cities are dripping with the waters of Sodom, and some of the western States sunder the marriage covenant with as little consideration as the most ruthless slaveholder. Sensuality is not at this hour producing as much social degradation nor destroying as many lives at the South as at the North; but this is not the point. What were the blacks socially when taken from Africa? The King of Dahomey has four hundred wives, whom he employs in carrying palm oil to the coast, and thence new rum and tobacco back to the palace for their husband and king. This rum and tobacco are the joint production of slavery and freedom. Slavery produces the tobacco and molasses, and then we Yankees make the rum and send them both in our vessels to the coast of Africa to buy oil gathered by women and carried on their heads in jars from fifty to two hundred miles. They are driven along by a herd of lazy men, and stepping carefully every minute under the express condition that if one pot of oil is spilled, one head of a woman and a wife must be cut off to atone for it.

Now, is it any great sin to catch a set of these lazy fellows, that live on the earnings of their wives, learn them to work, make them work, teach them to love one another and to love their children, so that their highest ambition shall no longer be to buy an extra number of wives that they may have a few "pickaninnies" (children) to sell? A wild African recently brought to Boston by a merchant, begged for an old gun which he saw. When asked what he wanted of it, he replied, "to buy a wife and have pickaninnies to sell." Is it any harm to yoke up such men and work the laziness and the brutality out of them? Yes, but you say there is a better way to do it. There may be, but it wants the evidence of a successful experiment. The Moravians once kindled their altars of devotion all around the African coast, but the waves of barbarism have extinguished them. Jamaica, in spite of devoted missionaries, British philanthropy, and American sympathy is fast receding through idleness to barbarism. Half a million of people there in twenty years have not lifted as many spades of earth as twenty thousand Yankees in California in one third of the time. If this half million had the twenty thousand to lead them and guide them and plan for them, then that island, which was once a fruitful field, would not be going back to a wilderness. The best thing that could be done for Africa, if they could live there, would be to send them a hundred thousand American Slaveholders, to work them up to some degree of civilization.



It is charged that the life of the slave at the South is sometimes at the mercy of the master. In Africa the immediate body servants of every chief, at his death, are at once beheaded and hurried forward to attend the new wants of their old master. Is it wicked to buy these devoted victims of heathenism and put them under the protection of civilized, and often of christian masters? Just in proportion as the price of these slaves is raised in Africa, just to that degree is there a motive to the heirs to spare their lives. So far as Africa is concerned, the slave trade was and is humane in its operations; its abolition was the result of sentiment, and not the determination of calm and deliberate statesmanship. That it was not called for by the condition of the world nor by any deep-seated moral sentiment, is proved from the fact, that the nation foremost in its abrogation has now revived it on other shores and under another name, adding to whatever sin there is in the direct open slave trade, the other sin of hypocrisy and false pretence.

Jamaica wants laborers, not because there are not plenty of them on the island, but because they will not work; and the same British philanthropy which stands guard over the stalwart and immensely lazy son of Ham, brings in the feeblar children of Shem, and dooms them to the same bondage under another name.

Honor to the sagacious and far-seeing statesmen of Georgia and South Carolina, almost the only consistent slave States in the Union; for they brested the united streams of British and American fanaticism, claimed and maintained their rights, and saved the South from barrenness and desolation, the North from a civil war, and the negroes from barbarism. If more laborers are needed for Texas, Central America, parts Mexico and Cuba, they ought to be brought, without objections, under such humane regulations as are made in other cases for the comfort of passengers. These laborers should come from Africa, because they are stronger and make better slaves than any of the copper-colored races, because they are more susceptible of transformation, and their improvement will be greater, and, lastly, because they are the most degraded.

As to the influence of slavery on the character of the whites, that is quite another question; but so far as the political history of our country is concerned, it is not easy to see how we could do without the slaveholders. See how their names shine along and adorn the past history of our country: Washington, Jefferson, the Randolphs, Bayard, Pinckney, Madison, Monroe, Crawford, Rutledge, Jackson, Calhoun, Clay, Benton—blot out these names, and a countless host of others, from the slave States, and what a blank is left in our history. And do you not find men from these States now in Congress, fully the peers of any that you can name from the North in statesmanship, honor, integrity, patriotism, and high moral and religious character? Do you not see some bright and shining lights around you from the South? I have read no speeches that give more entire satisfaction, than those of the clear-



headed, broad-minded, candid, fair, patriotic Stephens, of Georgia, or his associate, Jackson. In their speeches they seem to me models for smaller statesmen to look up to, and strive to equal.

A few words as to your motto at the head of your speech: "The fanaticism of the democratic party." If there could be found in the democratic party or in its history any of that element, certainly no one ought to be better qualified to deal with it than a gentleman from the republican ranks. They were born of it and nurtured by it; it is their meat and drink, their nervine and anodyne; their zeal in conflict and their consolation in defeat. The democratic party needs no defence; a simple recital of its biography is its highest eulogy. When the measure of British insult was full—when for twenty years they had insulted our flag, embarrassed and put under tribute our commerce; when they had seized our sailors and fired into our ships, and hung innocent men for being found on board an American vessel, then Henry Clay, Felix Grundy, and John C. Calhoun, and their associates, performed a lustration:—then the democracy of America vindicated the national honor, and established a new name and a new flag over the ocean; and from that day to this all the progress and expansion at home and honor abroad have been won by the measures of the democratic party.

This glory will remain, in spite of all that enmity or mistaken zeal can do to mar or destroy it. You may possibly succeed (but may heaven prevent you) in the attempt you are making to trample under your feet the covenant of our fathers, and exalt a sectional party with sectional aims to places of power and trust; but the day of your success would be the hour of your dissolution. Like the last day of the arctic summer, your sun would only rise to go down. Opposition is your cohesion—the only cement of your party. Your party can construct nothing; they lay down no principles; adhere to no name. Mr Banks goes for the absorption of the colored races, while Mr. Blair goes for their expulsion. Which shall be the policy of the party?

The democratic party has carried the country up from small beginnings to its present prosperous and happy condition; and, only occasionally being taken out to be aired and purified, is destined under that name, and with essentially its original and present principles, to govern this nation while we remain a republic. Equality among all the States—each State to manage their own affairs—slaveholders not to be taunted nor insulted for that fact—equal rights in the new Territories, and new lands annexed and new States welcomed, as fast as they wish to come.

These are the principles, mottoes, and banners of success which wave around the democratic party.

Affectionately, your brother,

JOSEPH C. LOVEJOY.

To HON. OWEN LOVEJOY, M. C.

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